

African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter

Volume 11

Issue 2 June 2008

Article 6

6-1-2008

Pieces of Chocolate: Surveying Slave and Planter Life at Chocolate Plantation, Sapelo Island, Georgia

Nicholas Honerkamp

University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Nicholas-Honerkamp@utc.edu

Rachel L. DeVan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan>

Recommended Citation

Honerkamp, Nicholas and DeVan, Rachel L. (2008) "Pieces of Chocolate: Surveying Slave and Planter Life at Chocolate Plantation, Sapelo Island, Georgia," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol11/iss2/6>

This Articles, Essays, and Reports is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.



June 2008 Newsletter

Pieces of Chocolate: Surveying Slave and Planter Life at Chocolate Plantation, Sapelo Island, Georgia

By Nicholas Honerkamp and Rachel L. DeVan*

Introduction

Over four decades ago Reynold J. Ruppe suggested that archaeological survey could reach beyond the discovery level of research (1966). Ruppe proposed that in addition to detecting the presence (or absence) of archaeological remains and defining their spatial and temporal extent, it is possible to develop problem-oriented survey approaches that address a variety of questions. Although Ruppe was specifically concerned with surface surveys in the Southwest United States (1966:314-315), his observations also apply to the subsurface survey data from plantation sites in the Southeast. With the advent of such powerful tools as remote sensing and GIS (Geographic Information Systems), coupled with a landscape archaeology perspective, survey has become much more than reconnaissance.

Such was the case at Chocolate Plantation (9MC96) on Sapelo Island, Georgia (Figure 1). The site is located on the west side of Sapelo, next to the Mud River and expansive *spartina* marshes, tidal creeks, and estuaries. Most of the Island's habitation sites, both prehistoric and historic, are found on high ground adjacent to navigable waterways (McMichael 1980). Chocolate is distinguished by the presence of substantial tabby foundations associated with an antebellum planter's big house, various outbuildings and support structures, and two rows of slave cabins (Figures 2 and 3).

This article presents archeological data generated from the excavation of a modest number of survey units on a systematic grid constructed over the c. 3.7 hectare site. The survey was carried out by a University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) Archaeological Field School, under the direction of the senior author. Due primarily to the occurrence of the extensive antebellum tabby foundations, previous archaeological approaches have been concentrated, not surprisingly, on those remains (Simmons 2004; Ray Crook, personal communication). While complementing the earlier work, the present study provides baseline survey data for the entire site, rather than a foundation-oriented subset. Although the 2006 survey sample for this site was small (less than 0.1% of the total site area), it was possible to apply GIS techniques to a number of issues that are important to plantation archaeologists and to local Geechee residents, many of whom are descendents of the Sapelo's former slave communities. A detailed final report on this project has been produced (Honerkamp, Crook, and Kroulek 2007), and the present article summarizes some of the data from it.



Figure 1. Map of Sapelo Island showing location of Chocolate Plantation.

Historical Background: The Place Known as Chocolate

The origin of Chocolate Plantation as a historic and as an archaeological entity involves a somewhat complex narrative. The overview that follows relies principally on the published research of Coulter (1939), Keber (2002), Thomas (1989), and Sullivan (1997, originally 1991) as reviewed in Crook, Bailey, Harris, and Smith (2003).

The name Chocolate almost certainly derives from a 16th-century Native American town known as Chucalate (Larson 1991:7). First contact with Sapelo's original inhabitants undoubtedly came in the form of a 16th century Spanish mission (Worth 2008), but its location is currently unknown. The most likely candidate for the initial historic occupation at 9MC96 is in the mid-18th century. Along with the nearby islands of Ossabaw and St. Catherines, Mary Musgrove and her husband Thomas Bosomworth claimed Sapelo Island by virtue of a disputed grant from the Creek Indian chief Malatchi. Failing to validate their claim with the British crown did not prevent Musgrove and Bosomworth from selling an undivided half title of Sapelo to one Isaac Levy, a (seemingly naïve) London merchant. Levy thereupon "settled all his affairs in



Figure 2. Ruins of Plantation House at Chocolate, circa early 1930s. Note restored barn in background and porch of restored cabin on right (Vanishing Georgia Collection, Georgia Department of Archives and History).



Figure 3. Slave cabin foundations at Chocolate, circa early 1930s (Vanishing Georgia Collection, Georgia Department of Archives and History).

England & went to live and reside in America and hath been at great Expences in improving his aforesaid Acquisition” (Levy 1760); he also claimed, again at vast expense, “to settle & cultivate the said lands” (Levy 1767). Whether Levy actually did so is unknown, but what is certain is that the Crown ignored his Musgrove/Bosomworth-derived claim for Sapelo and sold the island to a land speculator at a 1759 public auction. Following this sale, Henry Yonge and William

DeBrahm (Surveyors General of the Georgia Colony) completed a topographic survey for the purchaser and drafted a map entitled “A Plan of the Islands of Sappola.” On it are shown three house symbols at Chocolate (Figure 4) and a fourth to the south, near the southern end of what would later be called Long Row Field. These structures appear in an area that roughly corresponds to Chocolate, as determined by overlaying a modern map of the island at the same scale and orientation as the 1760 version. Perhaps these structures were part of Isaac Levy’s real or imaginary “improvements” that he claimed to have made. Suffice it to say that this map suggests that material remains dating to the second half of the 18th century might possibly occur in the site’s archaeological record, as would architectural evidence associated with the early structures.

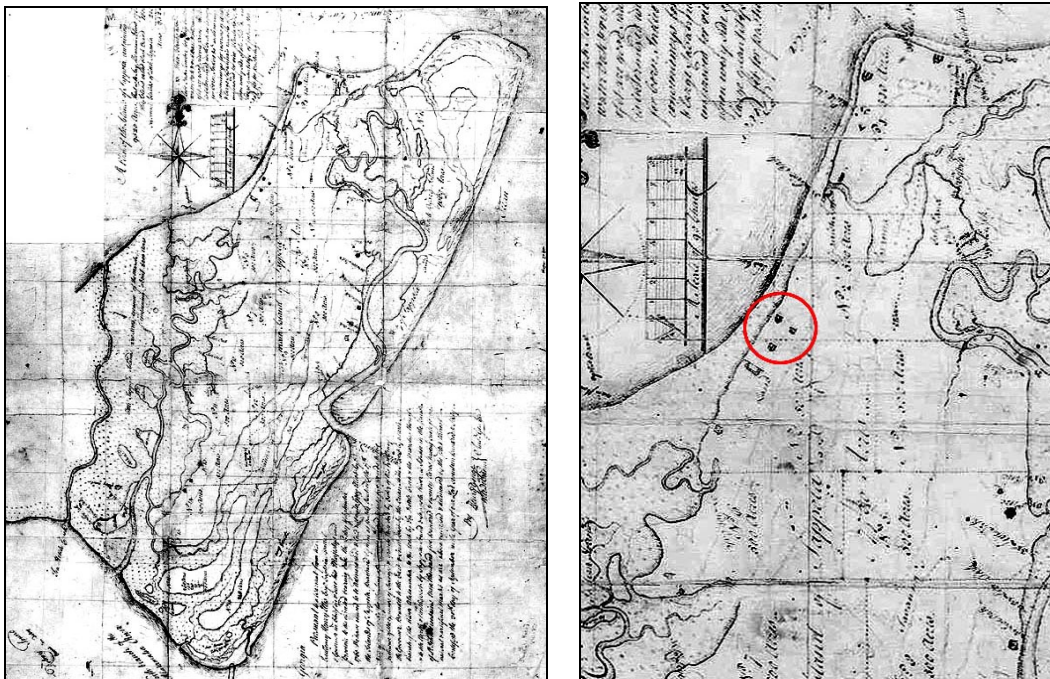


Figure 4. 1760 Yonge and DeBrahm Map with close up showing Chocolate vicinity (Georgia Department of Archives and History).

A series of landowners acquired Sapelo but no documented occupations occur at Chocolate until the turn of the century. In 1793 Lewis Harrington bought the property and actively farmed the Chocolate tract for several years with the labor of 68 slaves. Harrington sold his Chocolate holdings in 1801 to co-buyers Richard Leake and Edward Swarbreck. Upon the death of his father-in-law Richard Leake in 1802, Thomas Spalding became co-owner with Swarbreck of the Chocolate tract. After briefly leasing the property for three years to Richard Hopkins, Swarbreck took over the property in 1808.

Tabby construction began in earnest at Chocolate during Swarbreck’s tenure and was an enormous undertaking, unparalleled at any other site on the island. Preparation of the tabby mixture – consisting of equal parts of shell, lime from burned shell, and sand – included collecting salt-free oyster shell from shell midden deposits found at nearby Native American archaeological sites (including Long Row Field) and transporting it to the construction site.

Roughly 1050 cubic meters of shell was brought into Chocolate to construct Swarbreck's tabby buildings (Honerkamp Crook, and Kroulek 2007:8). The labor to accomplish this feat would have been provided by the plantation's slaves.

The substantial nature of the Chocolate slave cabins and their formal layout are in distinct contrast to the modest construction techniques and dispersed settlement patterns associated with Thomas Spalding's contemporary slave communities (Crook 2008). Edward Swarbreck himself provided a rationale for such an investment (Hopkins 1821:156): "[T]he walls are of tabby, which in a little while becomes like stone, requiring no repair: this causes a considerable saving to the negroes, for it is generally expected that they will make the repairs as they become requisite, unless they are so to much extent, and then the plantation mechanics are employed: these always build the negro houses." When asked his motive for building the quarters of tabby, Swarbreck replied "It makes my negroes more comfortable, and I desire to leave my estate as valuable as possible to those who may inherit it." Other tabby remains at Chocolate also appear to date to Swarbreck's time, including a large (80 feet by 170 feet) two-story plantation house (Figure 2) and numerous substantial outbuildings.

Ownership of Chocolate changed around 1827, when Swarbreck sold the property to Dr. Charles W. Rogers. This Northerner continued operations and constructed a two-story tabby barn, indicating a new agricultural focus on livestock and hay. The McIntosh County Tax Digest shows that Rogers owned 93 slaves in 1837. Thomas Spalding, one of the most prominent planters on the Georgia coast (DeVan 2008), purchased Rogers' holdings of 7,000 acres on the North End in 1843. He then gave a large parcel (including Chocolate) to his son Randolph as a wedding gift. Randolph and his family resided at Chocolate until the plantation house burned in 1853, when they moved into his father's house on the South End. Plantation operations at Chocolate presumably continued under Randolph's direction until at least 1857, when he moved to the mainland.

The War Between the States disrupted plantations and their slave communities on Sapelo. Some slaves remained on the island or accompanied planter families inland. At least a few of the slaves who stayed behind joined with the Union forces. Several island residences were looted and vandalized during this period. Chocolate seems to have been abandoned, but possibly by 1870 and certainly by 1875 the Jacob Green family resided at the site and was producing small amounts of cotton for sale in Savannah (Bishop 1878). The 1910 Federal Census indicates that a single household was present at Chocolate, consisting of Jacob Green, his wife Elisa, a son and grandson, and an adopted son.

Howard E. Coffin, a wealthy industrialist, purchased most of the island in 1912 to serve as his retreat and a hunting preserve. Coffin's operations and development activities on Sapelo were extensive, and at Chocolate they included the restoration of the Roger's barn and the renovation of an old tabby building near the manor for a hunting cabin (Figure 2). During the Coffin era Jacob Green and his family continued to live at Chocolate, as a farmer and also probably as a caretaker and attendant to guests who used the hunting cabin. The Green residence at this time may have been a refurbished slave cabin near High Point Road (Maurice Bailey, personal communication). However, this structure is not shown on the soil survey map of McIntosh County, published in 1929 by the United States Department of Agriculture, depicting

both soil types and features of the island's cultural landscape near the end of the Coffin era. At any rate, artifacts associated with a postbellum-early 20th century Geechee occupation could be anticipated at Chocolate.

During the Depression, Sapelo was acquired by R.J. Reynolds, primarily for use as a private hunting preserve. Today most of Sapelo Island is owned and managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). A community of private landowners reside in Hog Hammock (pop. 70), on the southeast side of the island. Many are descendents of Sapelo's Geechee slaves and freedmen.

Methodology

One basic objective of the Chocolate project was to carry out a comprehensive archaeological survey in order to identify the nature and extent of buried cultural resources at the site (Ruppe's reconnaissance level). Besides presenting the project sponsor (DNR) with an objective, ground-truthed record of prehistoric and historic artifact distributions that would aid in the future stewardship of the site, the survey also provided a guide for future research. In addition, through the application of GIS modeling, artifact pattern recognition, and quantitative analysis, some of the research conclusions generated by the results of past fieldwork were tested. Finally, new questions about the material conditions of slave and planter life were also addressed (Honerkamp, Crook, and Kroulek 2007).

Using a 20-meter interval grid, the UTC archaeological field school spent four weeks at the site excavating and screening (1/4" mesh) a systematic sample of 117 survey pits; one pit was not taken to sterile due to the presence of a large tabby feature near the surface. This resulted in the recovery of 2621 historic and 863 prehistoric artifacts, 20.4 kilograms of tabby plaster, 195 liters of shell, and the identification of 14 subsurface features, including postholes, trash pits, and possible cellars. The 20-meter interval grid allowed application of a GIS-based approach for analyzing and displaying artifact distributions (Figure 5).

Once artifact analysis was completed, the data were organized using Microsoft Access. Data were keyed to excavation unit and associated field specimen numbers. Totals for artifact classes or types were then generated for each unit and these data were imported into ArcCatalog and ArcMap 9.1 for georeferencing and statistically-based spatial analysis. ArcMap's Spatial Analyst toolbar was used to create an "inverse distance weighted interpolated raster layer" (IDW) which extrapolates artifact distributions from data locations, in this case our survey units. The artifact densities are represented by a color ramp from green (low) to red (high) on the maps presented below. All models within this paper incorporate Ray Crook's base map with an overlay of the GIS shapefile and spatial analysis.

Survey Results

The 117 survey pits excavated during this project produced abundant artifacts and features. When displayed as GIS artifact contour maps, the artifact frequencies, densities or volumes allow us to generate and test several hypotheses concerning site structure and

function. These spatial models are of course contingent on the limitations inherent in the survey methodology, with small sample bias being the most obvious potential skewing

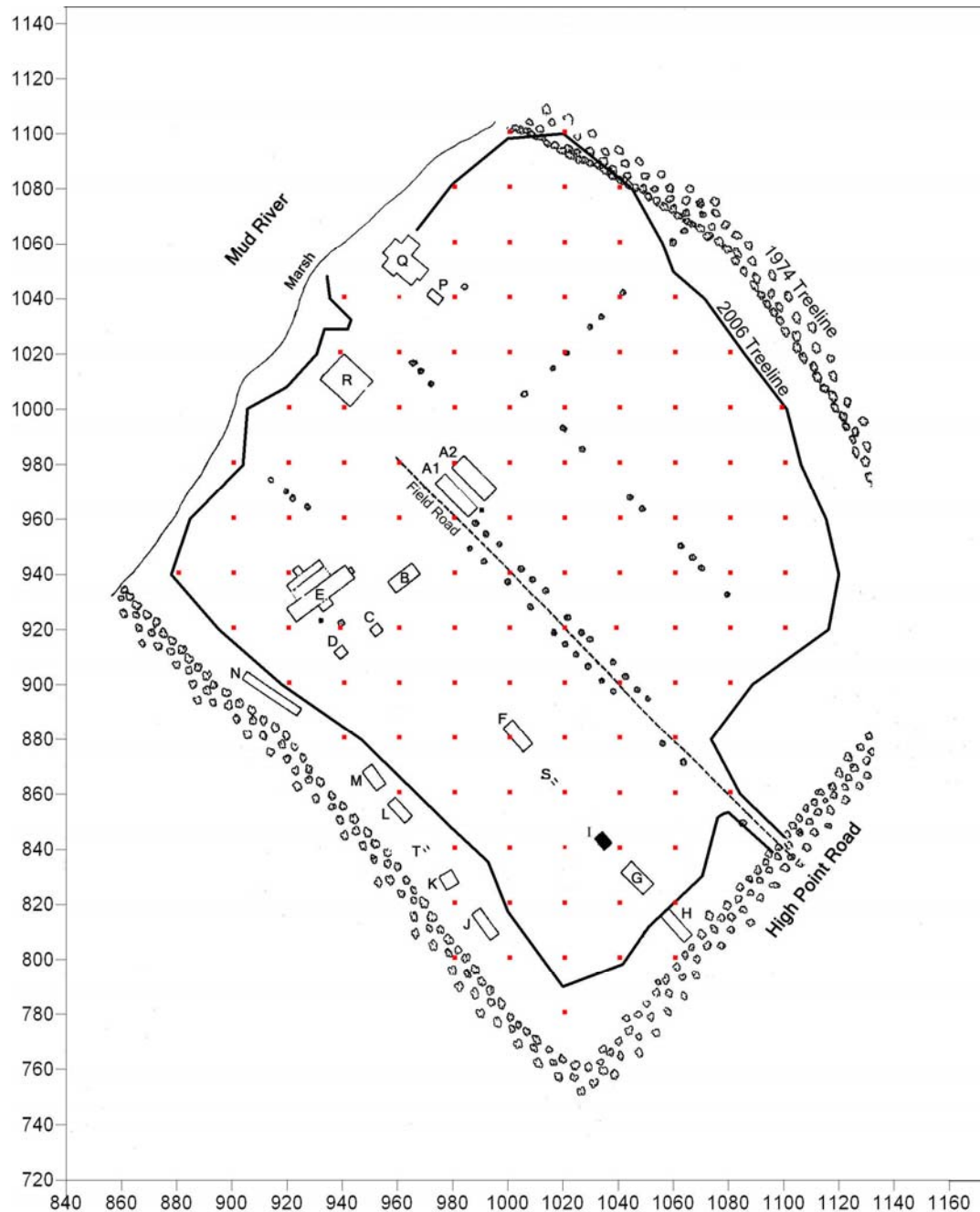


Figure 5. Overview of archaeological features and survey grid at Chocolate. Key: A1/A2, warehouses; B/C/D/N, support structures; E, planter's residence; R, barn; Q, P modern; all other structures are slave cabin duplexes. Survey locations are shown as red squares (not to scale); grid orientation is magnetic north. Base map courtesy of Ray Crook.

factor. On the other hand, there is something to be said for a broad-scale approach consistently applied to areas of the site that do *not* contain obvious tabby remains – an approach that has not been followed in the previous efforts at this site. Sampling issues notwithstanding, however, what is striking about the results is the highly productive nature of the archaeological resources sampled at Chocolate. Given the miniscule sample size that this project ultimately generated (29.25 m² from about 36,800 m², or just 0.08% of surface area, excluding trees and building footprints/interiors), 9MC96 appears to possess an impressively rich archaeological record. This is equally true in both slave cabin and big house locations.

Features

A distinct plow zone was noted in almost all the survey units, and this probably represents both postbellum farming and relatively modern disking carried out by DNR. Despite this impact, 14 cultural and natural features were identified during the survey (Table 1). Due to the small size of the survey units, features often were defined only after they had been inadvertently excavated as part of the survey unit fill. Hence, it is probably more accurate to say that in many cases the bottom portions of 14 features were identified. As a consequence, definitive interpretations of feature functions are conspicuously absent, and this constitutes a definite drawback of the half-meter unit size that was employed (a requirement of the excavation permit with DNR). As noted in Table 1, Features 5 and 12 were found to be modern utility trenches for water and electricity, while Features 10, 11 and 13 were ultimately defined as manifestations of faunalurbation, specifically, burrowing mammals or reptiles (Schiffer 1987).

The successful identification of seven historic features, a prehistoric pit, and a posthole of unknown origin indicates two things: the effectiveness of the systematic survey, despite its inherent limitations, and the “busy” nature of the archaeological record at Chocolate. That this many viable features were located with such a small sample size is certainly a testament to the rich archaeological potential of the site.

Table 1. Feature List, 2006 Chocolate Plantation Survey.

<u>Feature</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Opening/closing</u>
1	1000N 920E	Historic posthole on north profile of survey unit	68-105 cm*
2	860N 1020E	Tabby fragment associated with Structure S	5 cm
3	980N 980E	Historic posthole adjacent to Structure A ²	62-69 cm
4	960N 1000E	Probable prehistoric pit, unknown function	26-64 cm
5	1040N 960E	Modern Ditch Witch [®] trench with lead pipe	19-29 cm
6	960N 940E	Bottom of possible posthole of unknown origin	53-59 cm
7	920N 960E	Possible root cellar and/or trash pit, historic	83-88 cm

8	920N 980E	Edge of historic pit (possible trash pit)	49-62 cm
9	820N 1060E	Possible foundation trench or trash pit associated with Structure H	30-61 cm
10	820N 1060E	Probable rodent burrow beneath Feature 9	46-61 cm
11	800N 1060E	Rodent burrow	47-54 cm
12	1020N 940E	Modern Ditch Witch [®] trench and electric cable	38-54 cm
13	1080N 1040E	Rodent burrow	26-47 cm
14	900N 920E	Historic cellar or trash pit	90-111 cm

* Centimeters below surface.

Historic Artifacts

Overall artifact tallies appear in Table 2, which provides a summary of artifact groups and classes loosely based on South's (1977) approach for historic sites. These totals include materials associated with the features that were described above, in addition to the plow zone contexts. Table 3 lists the historic ceramics. After briefly discussing and illustrating various selected artifact categories, we will more closely examine the distributional data in terms of artifact density contours maps.

Table 2. Chocolate Plantation Artifact Groups and Classes.

	<u>Count</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Volume</u>
Kitchen Group			
Ceramics	258		
Container Glass	241		
Kitchenware	1		
Bone	1322	939 ¹	
Modern Glass	204		
Architecture Group			
Cut Nails	399		
Spikes	4		
Pintal	1		
Strap Hinge	1		
Brash Washer	1		
Window Glass	57		
Tabby Plaster	-	20374 ¹	
Shell	-		195.15 ²
Wire Nails	56		

Furniture Group		
Brass Tack	1	
Arms Group		
Lead balls and shot	4	
Firing Caps	5	
Shell casings	1	
Lead slug	5	
Shotgun shell	1	
Clothing Group		
Buttons	4	
Beads	3	
Suspender fastener	1	
Personal Group	-	
Tobacco Pipes		
White Clay Stem	16	
White Clay Bowl	9	
Stub Stem Bowl	2	
Activities		
Sad Iron	1	
Doll Arm	1	
Stones	22	
Aboriginal Ceramics	318	851.0 ¹
Fired Clay ¹	528	301.2 ¹
Debitage	17	24.0

¹ Measured as weight in grams

² Measured in liters

Table 3. Historic Ceramic Types From Chocolate.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage¹</u>
Lead glaze earthenware	11	4.4
Lead Glaze Redware	3	1.2
Delftware, Plain	1	0.4
Slip Decorated Earthenware	1	0.4
Astbury	2	0.8
Creamware, Plain	20	8.1
Pearlware, Plain	16	6.4
Pearlware, Blue-On-White Hand Painted	2	0.8
Pearlware, Green-On-White Hand Painted	1	0.4
Pearlware, Blue Edged	2	0.8

Pearlware, Green Edged	3	1.2
Pearlware, Annular Brown	3	1.2
Pearlware, Annular Polychrome	3	1.2
Pearlware, Transfer Print Blue-On-White	10	4.0
Whiteware, Plain	98	39.7
Whiteware, Blue-On-White Hand Painted	4	1.6
Whiteware, Blue Edged	1	0.4
Whiteware, Green Edged	2	0.8
Whiteware, Annular	3	1.2
Whiteware, Annular, Blue	2	0.8
Whiteware, Annular, Brown	6	2.4
Whiteware, Annular, Polychrome	2	0.8
Whiteware, Annular, Polychrome Finger Paint	2	0.8
Whiteware, Annular, Dendritic	1	0.4
Whiteware, Transfer Print Blue-On-White	18	7.3
Whiteware, Transfer Print Brown-On-White	6	2.4
Whiteware, Transfer Print Polychrome	2	0.8
Yellowware, Plain	1	0.4
Stoneware, Brown Salt Glazed	9	3.6
Stoneware, Gray Salt Glazed	10	4.0
Stoneware, Alkaline Glazed	1	0.4
Porcelain, Plain	1	0.4
Unidentified	10	-
Total	257	

¹ Excluding Unidentified Ceramics.

Ceramics. Not including the 10 unidentified sherds, 247 ceramic fragments comprising 32 recognizable types were recovered from the survey. Most are refined wares: including the two sherds of delftware and slip decorated earthenware, 86% of the ceramic assemblage is composed of presumed serving wares. Due to small sherd sizes, it was not possible to assign a form to most of the sherds, although a flat-sectioned or round-sectioned attribute was recorded. The net result of this minimum-level shape analysis is to simply note that all 22 sherds of annular ware, regardless of variety, were round sectioned, which is consistent with the bowl forms with which these wares are often associated. Beyond this unsurprising discovery, little can be gleaned.

Another way to parse the ceramic data is to note if particular types are spatially associated with slave cabins versus the main house and other, non-slave structures. While this is explored in more detail in the next section using GIS analysis, at a more macroscopic scale we can roughly divide the site into a “slave cabin area” versus “planter area.” For the purposes of such a comparison, the 39 survey units found at or below the 900 N line (see Figure 5) have been labeled as primarily slave cabin-associated, and above this line the remaining units as planter-associated, including various non-domestic structures. It might be expected for the slave areas to be associated with higher percentages of utilitarian wares (lead glazed earthenware, redware, and coarse salt-glazed stoneware) than the planter areas, but the difference was minimal: 14.8% ($n=17$) to 12.9% ($n=17$), respectively, out of a total of 115 sherds in the lower section and 132

sherds in the upper parcel. Postbellum re-occupation as well as small sample size may factor into this result. Another common assumption for slave sites is that annular wares are more commonly associated with slave foodways than with those of planters. For the slave cabin area, the 12 sherds of various annular ware styles comprised 10.4%, with 10 sherds, or 7.6% associated with the planter-area ceramic assemblage. Again, the sample is so small that this may not constitute a significant difference. Targeted larger test pits in clearly identifiable slave and planter contexts would be expected to provide more meaningful comparisons.

A look at Table 3 makes it clear that colonial-period ceramics recovered during the 2006 survey are in the minority; the grand total for delftware, Astbury, slip decorated earthenware, and all the creamware – which could easily post-date the colonial period – is 24 sherds, or 9.7% of the total recognizable ceramics. Thus, the intriguing structures that appear in the Chocolate vicinity on the 1760 Yong map (Figure 4) may be associated with a minor but significant archaeological manifestation of a pre-Harrington colonial occupation at Chocolate as discussed in the Artifact Distributions section below.

Nonceramic Artifacts. Figures 6, 7, and 8 illustrate a sample of various artifacts recovered during the survey. Almost all of the tools and personal items illustrated here were included in a UTC Archaeology Day presentation that was organized for local residents of the island near the end of the field work (see below).



Figure 6. Miscellaneous iron artifacts. Clockwise from top: sad iron, shutter pintle, broad-bladed hoe fragment, strap hinge.



Figure 7. Buttons from Chocolate. Top row (L to R): flat disc buttons, suspender fastener, all of brass. Bottom: four hole bone button, discolored bone button, shell button.



Figure 8. Beads from Chocolate. Left to right, amber faceted wire bead; dark purple faceted tube bead; blue tube bead with white appliqué (eroded).

Found in fill just above the Feature 7 trash pit/root cellar adjacent to Structure C, the sad iron gets its name from its solid or heavy weight. This version is a no-nonsense solid iron with a solid handle. On the traditional Tuesday ironing day, more than one was often employed to allow

heating of the “spares” (Carter 2006). Without running water, gas, or electricity, laundry cleaning and ironing would have been time- and labor-intensive, at Chocolate and elsewhere.

While the three beads that were recovered during the survey are listed under the “Clothing” group in Table 2, they may well have functioned as far more than simple adornment, as suggested below. As shown in Figure 8, they can be described as follows:

Left, an amber six-sided faceted wire-wound bead; this corresponds most closely to the Kidd and Kidd typology (1970:52, 85) as WIIC5, although they define this type as possessing five rather than six facets per row. This example has two rows of facets. It was found in the unit located approximately 39 m east of the restored main barn (Structure R). Marvin Smith (pers. comm.) has indicated that it appears to be a “decahedral bead.” While these normally fit the time frame of about 1690-1760, they have also been found on Creek sites in Oklahoma (post-Removal).

Middle, a dark purple (black in reflected light) faceted tube bead, Type If5, with six facets on each of three rows. This bead was recovered in an unambiguous slave cabin area, approximately 15 meters west of Structure J in 800N 980E. Marvin Smith indicates that this bead is similar to “Russian” beads, so called because they are common in Alaska. They seem to postdate 1813 or so.

Right, an opaque blue bead with an eroded wavy (spiral) white line surface decoration. This is probably a function of a layer that has fractured off the blue core. It most closely corresponds to Type Iij6, although the Kidds record a clear rather than opaque bright blue color (1970:75). It was found in 920N 960E, approximately 4 m to the east of Structure C. Smith has seen similar beads, all in contexts that postdate 1760.

While none of the beads provide tight temporal control, it is at least safe to say that none are types that would be expected to be associated with 17th century Spanish missions. Stine et al. (1996:57) argue that bead types and colors found at southern plantation sites were primarily a function of slave “cultural preference and consumer choice” rather than simply market availability. Their overview of the informal slave economy reinforces this contention. Antebellum beads could have multiple meanings that were imbedded in African belief systems. They could be worn as simple adornment, but also as social signifier, and as charms to ward off the evil eye, bring good luck or prevent sickness. According to ethnohistoric sources reviewed by Stine et al. (1996:63-64), blue beads were frequently associated with charms, while black beads were sometimes associated with evil or death. Blue is consistently the most common bead color in the colonial and antebellum periods across the South, including coastal Georgia plantation sites (Hardy 2002). The presence of blue, black and amber beads at Chocolate may have communicated multiple meanings and implications to slaves – meanings that Swarbreck, Rogers or Spalding most likely missed. Echoing Thomas (1998: 545), Meredith Hardy suggests:

To the owners, the slaves were spending their meager earnings on seemingly meaningless baubles, but in fact, they represent a continuity of belief systems that changed in accordance with their belief systems. Given their religious function in Africa, the use of

glass beads could even be interpreted as an overt statement of defiance on the part of the slaves against these owners, given their forced exposure to the belief systems of their owners. (2002:121-122)

Historic Artifact Distributions

A series of historic artifact distribution maps have been constructed from the survey data, as explained earlier. These maps provide site-wide spatial and density information for various artifact types, wares, and classes. In conjunction with the feature information, this spatial artifact data provides both macroscopic and area-specific images of settlement patterning at Chocolate. These data also can serve as the basis for future archaeological testing and for managing the important cultural resources that exist there.

Although the interval-scale color ramps appearing in these maps are unique to each artifact class and type, in all cases a zero value is indicated by green and a red contour symbolizes the greatest frequency, weight, or volume that occurs for each artifact category.

Kitchen Group. Figure 9 models overall historic ceramic frequencies at the site. At the outset it should be pointed out that we were not exactly overwhelmed by ceramic counts from this survey, nor were high frequencies expected given the small sample size – the 116 units that were dug to sterile had a mean of just 2.2 sherds each. Nevertheless, it is possible to derive some meaning from these relatively modest frequencies that were recovered.

Immediately apparent is the contrast between the presence and absence of sherds above and below the current access road into the site from High Point Road. A unit adjacent to and behind the kitchen modern house (Building Q) provides a possible exception to this generalization, as it yielded four sherds of whiteware, but these are almost certainly of postbellum origin. We suggest that what is illustrated here is nothing short of land use writ large, that is, at the site level: this and other maps described below consistently show that the upper (northern) area of the site contained no buried antebellum domestic components. Instead, this area seems to have been used exclusively for farming activities (hence our appropriately green color ramp signifying a lacuna of artifacts).

A tree line that occurs at a suspiciously right angle to the Chocolate access road presents the possibility that another road at the site might have been bounded by slave cabins or other structures. However, this seems not to have been the case, as little if any architectural or midden material was noted in or adjacent to it. Instead, this relatively modern line of trees (based on trunk diameters) may simply mark the access route to a caretaker's house and dog pen located on the northeast edge of the site (Cornelia Bailey, 2006, pers. comm.).

Relatively heavy concentrations of ceramics are present in five primary loci at Chocolate. Adjacent to the Mud River, 980N 920E contained the highest sherd count of any unit. This may be a midden associated with the presumed early structure that the Feature 1 posthole is part of. Near the big house, we have already discussed the discovery of the Feature 7 root cellar or trash pit at 920N 960E (next to Building C), and how this might indicate the possible presence of an

additional non-tabby structure. The heavy sherd count and the presence of other artifacts at this location may support either feature interpretation. Forty meters north, 960N 960E is a second locus of ceramic disposal that is about 20 m northeast of the big house. Although no feature

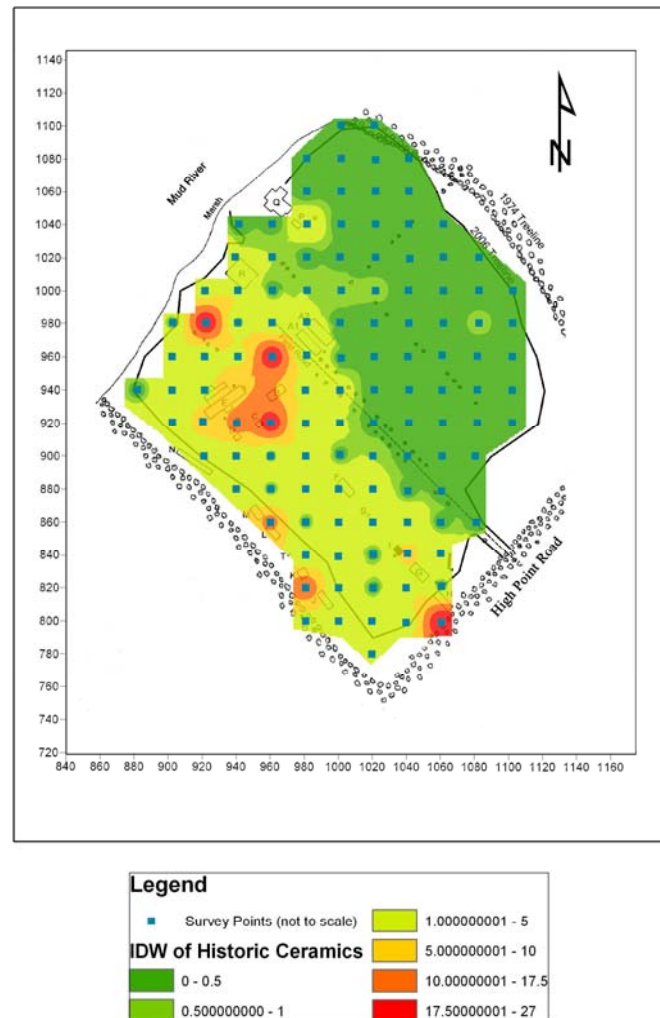


Figure 9. Historic ceramic distributions, all types, by frequency.

was noted there, a posthole (Feature 6) was recorded in the adjacent unit to the west. The unit directly in back (south) of the main house is also moderately sherd-heavy, and possibly represents a Brunswick-style disposal pattern (South 1977), while the front entrance (facing the Mud River) shows little sheet deposit refuse. Another possibility is that the heavier ceramic contours behind the house actually result, at least in part, from sheet deposits associated with Structure B, which was used by Coffin and his cronies as a hunting cabin in the 20th century. But whatever the source, the site's western quadrant is a busy one in terms of domestic ceramic deposition.

Besides the north loci, three slave cabin locations also exhibited high sherd counts. Two of these areas are found along the west slave cabin row. One (860N 960E) is next to the northeast corner of Structure L, while the other (820N 980E) is between Structures K and J. Why this row shows heavier ceramic disposal than the east row is unknown. Just west of the Structure H foundation and adjacent to High Point Road, 800N 1060E lacked any cultural features but was certainly one of the most productive units at the site, for virtually all classes of artifacts. Based on the presence of a plastic button recovered from a test unit, Simmons proposed a postbellum occupation, or rather re-occupation, for this cabin (2004:59). Oral history indicates that Structure H was a possible home site for the Jacob Green family (Maurice Bailey, 2006, pers. comm.). It is likely that the high artifact counts for this survey unit reflect refuse from both the antebellum and the postbellum re-occupation periods.

In an effort to isolate “early” versus “late” occupations at the site, ceramic ware distributions were distinguished within the historic ceramic class. The results are illustrated in Figure 10, which models the frequency contours of creamware, pearlware, (plus sherds of Astbury and a single delft fragment) versus the combined whiteware types, respectively. Since creamware/pearlware types generally date earlier than whitewares (Noel Hume 1974), it was hoped that clear spatial and therefore temporal distinctions would ensue from this analysis.

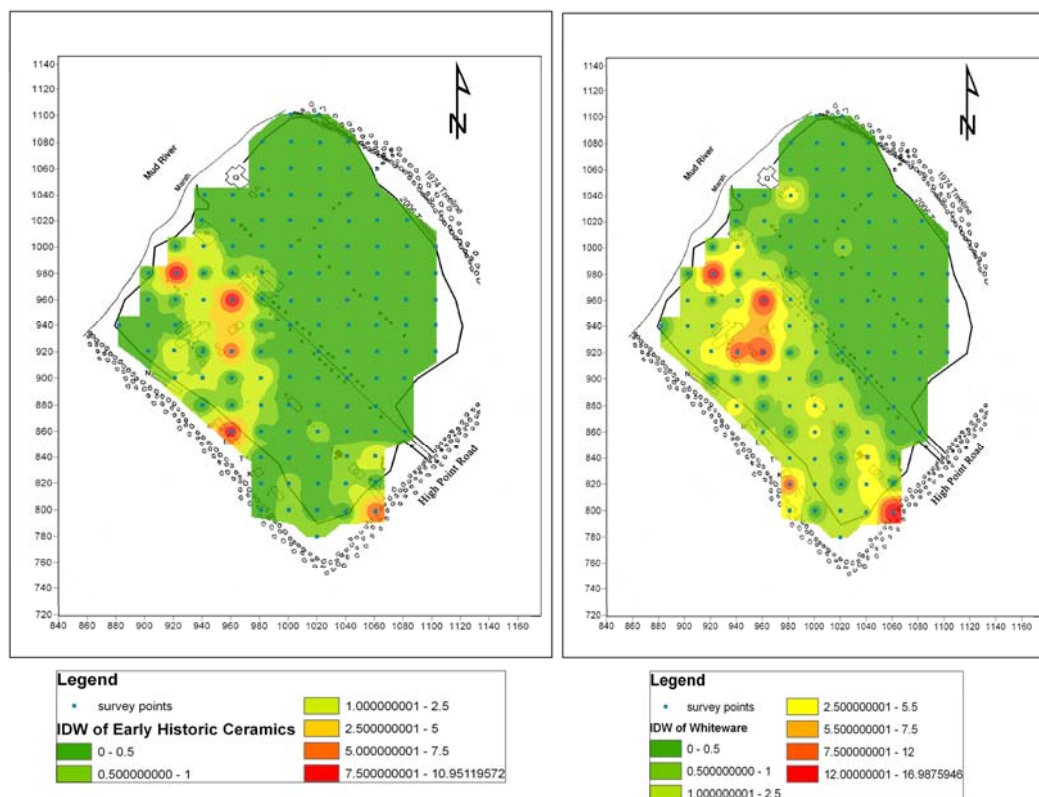


Figure 10. “Early” vs. “late” historic ceramic frequency distributions.

Complicating things somewhat is the (1) overlap between creamware-pearlware and pearlware-whiteware manufacturing and use dates (much of the whiteware shown in Figure 10 may well

have been deposited prior to Emancipation), and (2) difficulty in distinguishing between the three wares. That said, all these wares clearly are restricted almost entirely to the southwest half of the site (below the access road). Besides the substantial difference in the sheer quantities of the early and late wares, the most obvious difference between them is seen in the absence of the earlier wares directly behind the big house; instead, moderate creamware/pearlware frequencies appear near the riverbank (980N 920E) and between the big house and Structure A.

Early wares are noticeably more frequent at one location on the west row of slave cabins (860N 960E), but the ceramic totals for this map are small and may suffer from small sample bias. Since whitewares seem to be more closely associated with the big house than the earlier types, this may suggest that it was built and occupied after pearlwares were commonly cycled into the archaeological record. Four of the highest-yielding units for early ceramics correspond to the same units for high whiteware frequencies, suggesting a long period of disposal behavior at these particular locations. That the greatest frequency for the earlier wares occurs adjacent to the Mud River is a possible indication for where testing for the earliest historic components of the site might be focused; an early house may be located there.

Since whitewares (147, 57%) are more than twice as numerous as the combined creamware (21, 8%) and pearlware sherds (40, 16%) in the total ceramic assemblage, the site's domestic occupation was evidently more intense in the second quarter of the 19th century than it was earlier. This corresponds to the latter part of Swarbreck's and the entire Rogers' occupation at Chocolate. A type-by-type breakdown could provide even finer-grain temporal clarity, but the low frequency of sherds by type (see Table 3) would inevitably lead to hollow chronological conclusions.

Another domestic artifact class is container glass. The site yielded 241 fragments, of which 192 had curved cross-sections and 49 were flat-sectioned. Figure 11 presents the fairly even distribution of the combined glass in the lower half of the site, with the highest frequencies concentrated in some of the same units noted above that exhibit high ceramic counts. In addition to the agrarian half of the site, container glass is absent in limited areas associated with both rows of slave cabins. Adjacent to Structure H, 800N 1060E contained nearly 30% ($n=70$) of the site's total for container glass. Along with the heavy ceramics from this unit, this unusual artifact density reflects the presence of a thick midden associated with it. This high glass count could also reflect the difficulty in distinguishing between modern and historic glass, and the glass assemblage from this unit could be a combination of both. On the other hand, unambiguously modern glass is concentrated largely near the restored barn, suggesting that the majority of the glass near Structure H is pre-20th century.

Architectural Group. Spatial analysis of architectural-related artifacts included window glass, tabby plaster, cut and wire nails, and (possibly) oyster shell. Here we will concentrate only on the first two categories.

Distinguishing between early and late versions of window glass was problematic. Figure 12 demonstrates the frequency of window glass that contained bubbles or patination; unpatinated

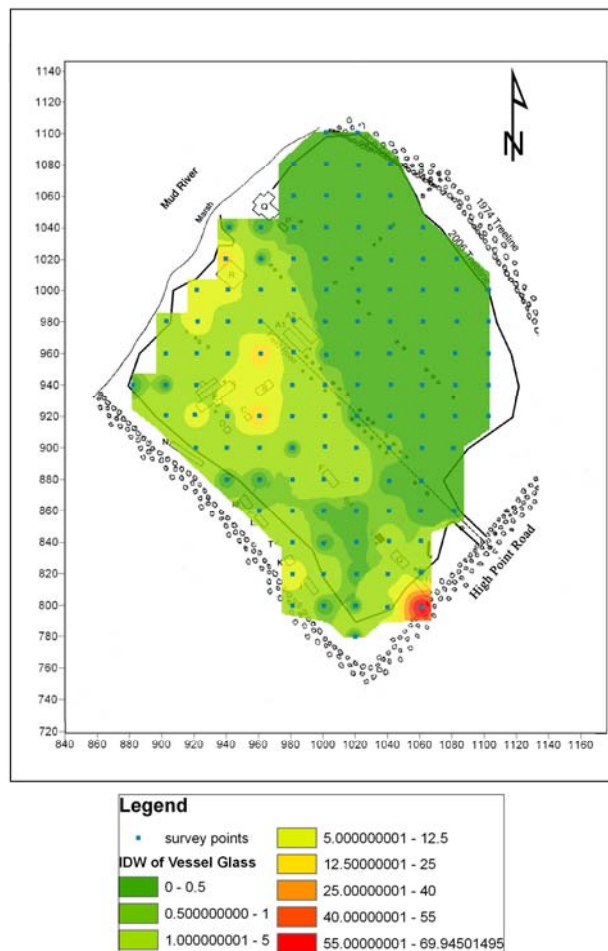


Figure 11. Vessel glass frequency distributions.

window glass was included under the modern category and does not appear in these contours. While this is an admittedly imperfect approach to distinguishing between “old” and “new” glass, it is believed to provide a reasonable image of the presence or absence of historic window glass at Chocolate. That image is revealing: the slave cabin areas are a sea of green, punctuated by four small islands of single fragments of window glass. Several local residents from Hog Hammock were not the least bit surprised by this finding: they stated that Sapelo’s slave cabins were not equipped with glazed windows, but instead simply had wooden shutters (“board windows”).

The big house and Structures C and D show more robust frequencies, as do the A1/A2 barn and the Structure R restored barn. The density of window glass at the north corner of the latter building (23 fragments from 1020N 940E) probably represents an intentional deposit, perhaps as part of a window replacement process when several Chocolate structures were restored by Coffin. Complicating this unit’s interpretation was the presence in it of a modern ditch containing a live utility line.

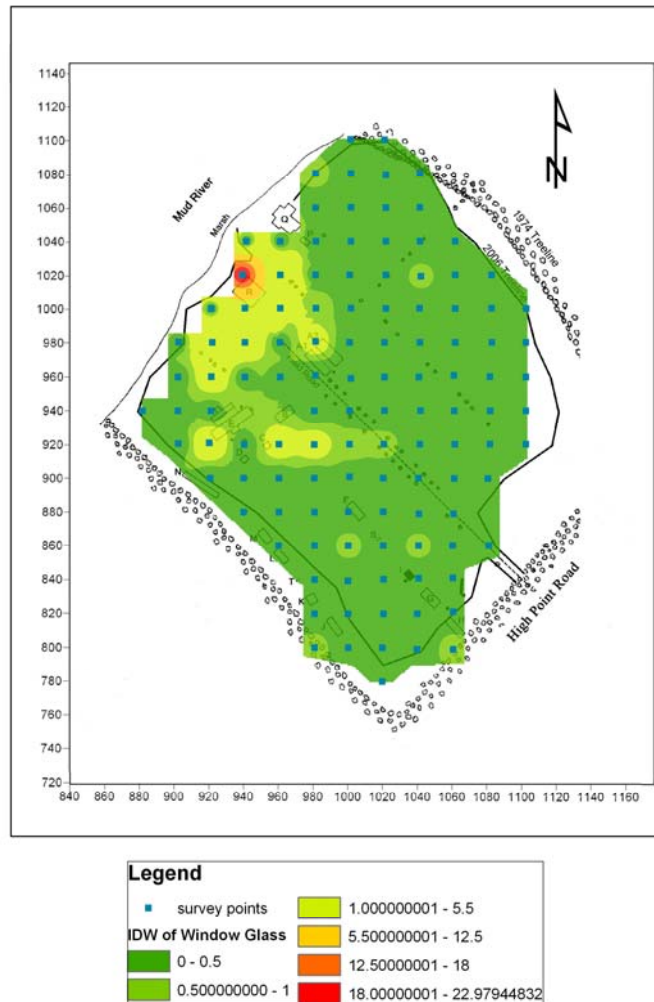


Figure 12. Window glass frequency distributions.

Another artifact class that was subsumed under the architecture group is tabby plaster. This version of tabby lacks the coarse shell of its structural counterpart and as a consequence is much more fragile. It was used primarily as a finishing surface, both exterior and interior. We quantified all that was recovered by weight, and the plaster distribution is shown in Figure 13. The most distinctive aspect of this distribution (21,368 g total) is the tendency of significant quantities of plaster to be concentrated near the big house or special-use structures, but *not* slave cabins. As with window glass, this indicates a caste-based disparity in material culture associated with a basic aspect of life, in this case housing. Apparently glazed windows and plaster finishes were luxuries that were denied to slaves by the plantation owner(s).

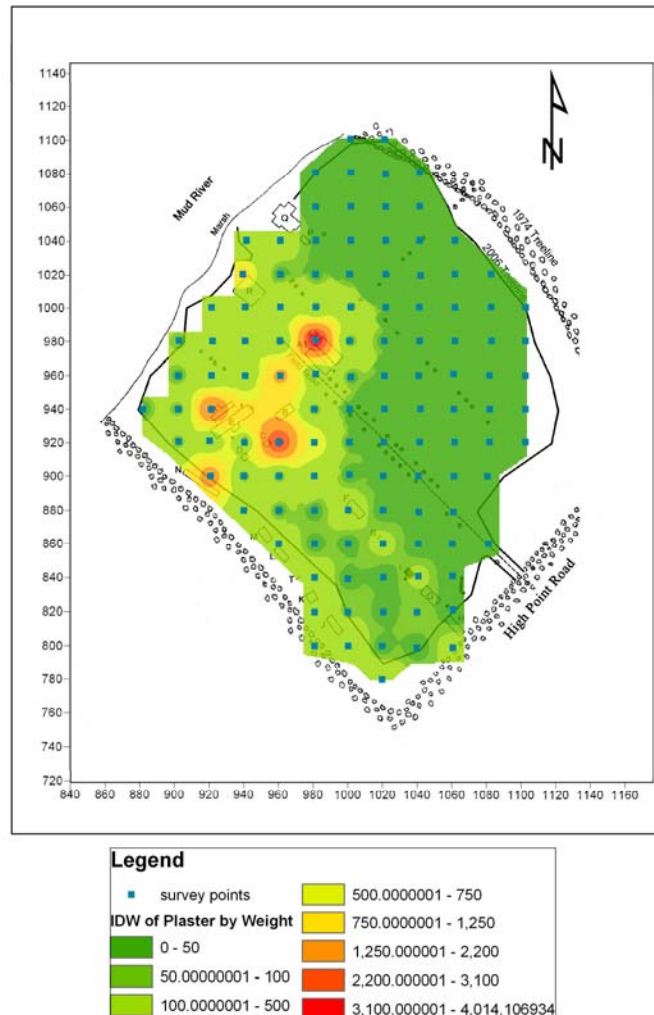


Figure 13. Tabby plaster distribution, by weight (grams).

Archaeological Education and Outreach

An important goal of the 2006 project was to develop an on-site outreach program that presented the results of the UTC research to inhabitants of Hog Hammock and other site visitors. In addition to giving guided tours to over 250 visitors of all kinds throughout the project's duration (including a tourist-filled van that arrived during the very last hour of fieldwork), UTC undertook a more formal education and outreach effort on Memorial Day (May 29, 2006). Preceded by several weeks of flyers and word-of-mouth announcements facilitated by Michele Johnson, Program Director of the Sapelo Island Cultural and Revitalization Society (SICARS), UTC hosted an "Archaeology Day" celebration that was open to the public. Approximately 35 residents of Hog Hammock and about 25 other visitors viewed the excavations, field lab activities, interpretive presentations, preliminary GIS maps, and artifact displays that highlighted

the survey process and the material recovered from the site up to that point (Figure 14). Several of the Hog Hammock residents are descended from Geechee slaves and freedmen who lived and worked on the antebellum plantations on Sapelo Island, and they showed a keen interest in the exhibits and presentations. They also engaged the UTC researchers with a stream of questions about specific artifacts found, what archaeological methods were used, and the interpretations of what was recovered. Since humans are visually-oriented, most people seem to have an intuitive understanding and interest in what GIS approaches can produce. Besides providing scientific information for testing hypotheses and addressing CRM needs, GIS offers a way to connect with nonarchaeologists on a level that they understand and appreciate. It is this last application that our work as archaeologists at Chocolate ultimately can have its greatest impact.

The Archaeology Day program turned out to be an interactive process: oral history information concerning the Coffin and Reynolds-era use of the site was provided to us by several eye-witnesses. It is fair to say that the “outreach” achieved by this program occurred in two directions.



Figure 14. Sapelo Island residents view artifacts as part of Archaeology Day.

Final Thoughts

Despite years and perhaps centuries of plowing, the archaeological record at Chocolate is remarkably intact, and includes the presence of both significant features and artifacts relating to the adaptations, lifestyles and activities of African-derived slaves, 19th century Geechee residents, and Anglo-American occupants. The systematic subsurface survey at 9MC96 successfully identified numerous features and artifacts representing all three historic components. The wide range of artifacts that is present in the survey collection, along with the

discovery of intact archaeological features, emphasizes the rich archaeological potential of this site. The survey also documented recent disturbances that have impacted Chocolate.

The application of GIS methods to the survey data has provided settlement patterning information that cannot be obtained in any other way, and it is certainly applicable at other coastal sites. However, we should also acknowledge that the current landscape at this particular site is ideally suited for the methodology that was employed there. Except on the margins of woods, a minimum of clearing to create line-of-sight transects for laying out the grid was necessary by the UTC crew. Thanks to DNR's regular maintenance of the surrounding fields, almost all of the survey effort could be devoted to establishing a grid and completing survey excavations. Finally, the site had a long and rich history of occupation, which made for an extensive archaeological record. More sparse occupations may not be so easy to discover.

Considering the small size and number of the units, along with their 20-m interval, the UTC survey identified a surprising number of cultural features. This indicates that a much larger number of features are undoubtedly present at the site. Several that were discovered certainly merit further investigation. Some that probably relate to the pre-Swarbreck era are not associated with extant tabby foundations. Although "early" artifacts are not abundant, they are present, as are several non-tabby features in the vicinity of the riverbank. It is this area, roughly between the big house and marsh, west of the big barn, that will likely yield evidence of the earliest historic components. What has become clear is that there is a hidden, possibly early, dimension to Chocolate that does not necessarily revolve around the substantial tabby remains that are so prominent there. Evidence of a post-Emancipation occupation at Chocolate has also been established and confirmed with oral history. The archaeological manifestations of adaptations that occurred in the Reconstruction Period can provide a valuable portrait of post-slavery Geechee agency and self-reliance during a dynamic part of Sapelo's history.

The artifact distribution maps presented in this essay can be used as a starting point for generating several test implications for future research at this site. In addition, from a CRM perspective, these maps provide a graphic representation of areas at Chocolate that are archaeologically sensitive. Based on these data, recommendations have been made to the sponsor concerning any future land-altering projects at the site, and we also suggest that DNR begin clearing back the slowly-encroaching (since 1975) tree line that has inexorably encompassed the west row of slave cabins. The trees and brush that are now obscuring the cabin foundations will inevitably be transformed into much larger trees that will damage the tabby remains as well as the archaeological record for a critically important section of 9MC66.

The pieces of Chocolate that have been investigated in this study form a complex and multifaceted whole, in time and space. The approach described here can also be applied to other sites on the island. For discovery-level research at any site, the combination of basic subsurface survey with GIS analysis yields powerful lines of evidence that go beyond presence and absence reconnaissance. Similar data can be generated and compared if a similar survey protocol is extended to other sites. Consistent methodologies applied on an intersite basis would allow more meaningful comparisons to be made than would a series of piecemeal separate and unequal approaches.

The Chocolate survey has also inspired us to make a final recommendation to DNR. The success of the Archaeology Day program was a powerful experience that demonstrated the intense interest in archaeology and history that Sapelo's Geechee inhabitants possess. Several of the visitors expressed a desire to view some of the artifacts at Hog Hammock after the research was completed. Thus, we have proposed development of an interpretive archaeological exhibit at either SICARS or the Hog Hammock Library that would foster significant interest in Sapelo's rich history and the ability of Geechee residents to connect to their cultural past. As of this writing, DNR has begun to implement such a program.

* Nicholas Honerkamp is a Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography and Director of the Jeffrey L. Brown Institute of Archaeology at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Rachel L. DeVan is enrolled in the graduate program in Terrestrial Archaeology at the University of West Florida.

References Cited

Bishop, Nathaniel H.

1878 *Voyage of the Paper Canoe: A Geographical Journey of 2500 Miles From Quebec to the Gulf of Mexico, During the Years 1874-5*. Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers.

Carter, Constance

2006 Transcript of *The History of Household Technology*. Library of Congress website, accessed 10-11-2006. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/journey/household-transcript.html>

Coulter, E. Merton

1939 *Thomas Spalding of Sapelo*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Crook, Ray

2008 Gullah-Geechee Archaeology: The Living Space of Enslaved Geechee on Sapelo Island. *The African Diaspora Archaeology Network Newsletter* (March): 1-28.

Crook, Morgan R., Cornelia Bailey, Norma Harris, and Karen Smith

2003 *Sapelo Voices: Historical Anthropology and the Oral Traditions of Gullah-Geechee Communities on Sapelo Island, Georgia*. Carrollton: State University of West Georgia.

DeVan, Rachel L.

2008 Challenging the Plantation Myth: A Comparison of the Economic Histories and Relative Success of Three Georgia Plantations. Honors thesis, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Hardy, Meredith

- 2002 Trinkets and Baubles: Processes of Creolization and the Relevance of Glass Beads on an Historic Slave Site, Stafford Plantation, Cumberland Island, Georgia. Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology. Tallahassee: Florida State University.

Honerkamp, Nicholas, Ray Crook, and Orion Kroulek

- 2007 Pieces of Chocolate: Site Structure and Function at Chocolate Plantation (9MC96), Sapelo Island, Georgia. Report on file, Jeffrey L. Brown Institute of Archaeology, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Hopkins, John Livingston

- 18[21] *Messalina's Questions; or, A Vindication of Slavery*. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Athens: University of Georgia Libraries.

Keber, Martha L.

- 2002 *Seas of Gold, Seas of Cotton: Christophe Poulain DuBignon of Jekyll Island*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Kidd, Kenneth E. and Martha A Kidd

- 1970 A Classification System for Glass Beads for the Use of the Field Archaeologists. Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No.1. National Historic Sites Service, Ottawa.

Larson, Lewis H.

- 1991 *A Guide to the Archaeology of Sapelo Island, Georgia*. Carrollton: West Georgia College.

Levy, Isaac.

- 1760 Petition to the King of England from Isaac Levy respecting the Islands of Sapelo, Ossabaw, and St. Catherine's, 1760. Document KRC043. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the University of Georgia Libraries, Athens.
- 1767 Petition of Isaac Levy, 1767 Dec. 22, to his majesty [the King of England]. Document KRC046. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the University of Georgia Libraries, Athens.

McMichael, Alan E.

- 1980 A Model for Barrier Island Settlement Patterning. In *Sapelo Papers: Researches in the History and Prehistory of Sapelo Island, Georgia*, Daniel P. Juengst, editor, pp. 47-60. Carrollton: West Georgia College Studies in Social Sciences, Volume 19. West Georgia College.

Noel Hume, Ivor

- 1974 *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Ruppe, Reynold J.

- 1966 The Archaeological Survey: A Defense. *American Antiquity* 31 (3):313-333.

Schiffer, Michael B

- 1987 *Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Simmons, Christopher W.

- 2004 Chocolate Plantation: A Geophysical and Archaeological Examination of a Sea Island Cotton Plantation on Sapelo Island, Georgia. M.A. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

South, Stanley

- 1977 *Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology*. New York: Academic Press.

Stine, Linda F., M. A. Cabak, and M.D. Groover

- 1996 Blue Beads as African American Cultural Symbols. *Historical Archaeology* 30(3):49-75.

Sullivan, Buddy

- 1997 *Early Days On the Georgia Tidewater: The Story of McIntosh County and Sapelo*. Darien, Georgia: McIntosh County Board of Commissioners. Originally 1991.

Thomas, Brian W.

- 1998 Power and Community: The Archaeology of Slavery at the Hermitage Plantation. *American Antiquity* 64(4):531-551.

Thomas, Kenneth H., Jr.

- 1989 The Sapelo Company: Five Frenchmen on the Georgia Coast, 1789-1794. *The Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians* 10:37-64.

Worth, John E.

- 2008 Sapelo Island During the Spanish Colonial Era. Paper presented at the 2008 Meetings of the Society for Historical Archaeology, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Return to March 2008 Newsletter:

<http://www.diaspora.uiuc.edu/news0308/news0308.html>